On seeing this couple, almost in a state of stark nakedness, seated on a bench among the cylinders and pistons of the engine, motionless for hours, we were necessarily reminded of the earthly paradise.

When among strangers the women are quiet and impassive, but when left to themselves they are full of fun and as playful as children. And this is generally the Indians' character.

The women take up a somewhat strange posture with their hands when they are standing. As they have no pockets to put them in, or fan with which to occupy them, or what have you, they place them upon their breasts which serve as supports for their arms which together rest upon them.

It would seem that such a habit would enlarge the breasts, but this is not so. The breasts are broad, it is true, but short and erect while the women are young. After expertoe virum, and having given suck to one or more children, the breasts shrivel and retract in a very unaesthetic manner, to tell the truth. It is to be noted that both men and women age early there, and also die early, and to this must be attributed the fact that there are few gray hairs even when there are faces and bodies so wrinkled as to make one believe that their owners must be as old as Methuselah.

I have gone into some detail in this matter of the breasts because it is known that in other regions, according to what is said, the women, when they give suck, give the nipple over the shoulder to the child which they are carrying on their backs. The fact is that no such thing occurs here.

The women, along with the men, have abundant, coarse, straight hair. They wear it rather long but not as long as they might, for it is shortened by wearing it in an unkempt fashion (which serves them as protection for eyes and forehead against the sun) and also by cutting.

They cut their hair, that on their faces as well as that on their scalps, with the jaw of a fish called palometa, which is armed with extraordinarily sharp teeth placed in two rows. The upper teeth dovetail exactly with the lower.

The palometa, the raya (ray--Translator) and the yacaré (alligator--Translator) are the scourge of those who bathe in this river and the lakes or pools which are fed by it. The palometa snaps, tears

/211/

755 [114] In the course of the mission to the Argentinian Chaco of which I was in charge during 1932-1933, I had the opportunity of being present at a certain number of ceremonies for the expulsion of illnesses, or evil spirits.

[753] [774] The Matako /Mataco/ Indians do not seem to be acquainted with any other medicine than magical medicine; that is normal since the illness takes the image of the sick person and not his body.

Among the ceremonies described below, a distinction can be made between those from which the whole village benefits and those from which only a single sick person benefits.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illnesses for All the Village

(April 8, 1933).

755 This ceremony took place in the morning in the open air 756 rather far from the houses, and was carried out by all the medi- 783 cine men /the English term is used/ of the village. They were 796 arranged in a row facing east, and all had a maraca and a bone [534] whistle in their hands. Some of them were carrying bands of rattles, either in the hand, slung over the shoulder, or hooked [242] over the elbows. Some officiants were dressed in red wool ceremonial shirts spangled with rings of shells, and others in war ● [237] shirts made of caraguata thread. Almost all were wearing red headbands decorated with feathers or hats adorned with ostrich feathers, and most had a bunch of ostrich feathers in the hand. [302] The faces of the principal medicine men were daubed with red and black, and those of the women with red. Facing the row of officiants were planted several arrows, points down, and a lance with the point up. In the course of the ceremony a bunch of ostrich feathers was attached to the top of the lance. When I arrived at the spot, I noticed a young /212/ man crushing ha'tax seeds in a gourd which the medicine men would take later.

1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6 Mataco SI7

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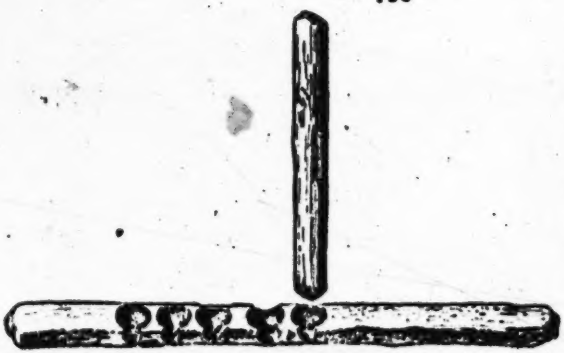

Fig. 148. Fire-drilling implement, consisting of two wooden sticks. Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. 2/3. Riksm. 03. 3. 193.

For scraping and polishing wooden objects, pieces of mussel-shell are used. Formerly, when the Choroti could not obtain iron, all woodwork was produced exclusively by means of fire and mussel-shells. In shaping a piece of wood, the parts that were to come away were burnt in the fire, and the charred parts then scraped off with a sharp-edged piece of mussel-shell.

Nordenskiöld mentions that the Choroti, in the same way as other Chaco tribes, use saws made of hard wood with which they, among other things, saw off the stem and leaves of the, to the Indians so important, caraguatá plant,[1] after having grubbed it up with a fork-like digging stick.

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Fig. 149. Stems of a liana (Asclepiadaceæ), which forms the material of which fire-drilling implements of the Choroti generally are made. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. 1/1. Riksm. 03. 3. 196.

Awls for working purposes are made of bone (fig. 147). Bone awls are also used for tattooing (see p. 75, 78), magical blood-letting (see pp. 63 and 64), and as weapons of offence (see p. 101).

Like other Chaco tribes, the Choroti produce fire by drilling. Their fire-kindling implement consists of two round-sectioned, dry sticks of wood (fig 148), usually obtained from a species of liana (of the Asclepiadaceæ), fig. 149. One stick (the female one), which is thicker, and usually longer, than the other one (the male stick), has one or more bowl-shaped indentations, at

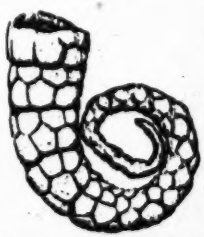

Fig. 150. Tail of armadillo, used as a tinder box. Mataco. Gran Chaco. Argentina. Exactly similar tinder boxes are used by the Choroti. 2/3. Riksm. 03. 3. 372.

[1] Nordenskiöld (11), pp. 63 and 66, also (18), pp. 110 and 111.